



Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Distr.: General

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Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Nineteenth session

Summary record (partial)* of the 377th meeting**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 26 February 2018, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Degener

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Consideration of reports submitted by parties to the Convention under article 35 (*continued*)

Initial report of Seychelles

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- * No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.
 - ** No summary records were issued for the 375th and 376th meetings.

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of the present record to the Documents Management Section (DMS-DCM@un.org).

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by parties to the Convention under article 35

Initial report of Seychelles (CRPD/C/SYC/1; CRPD/C/SYC/Q/1 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Seychelles took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Ms. Simeon** (Seychelles), introducing her country's initial report (CRPD/C/SYC/1), said that Seychelles, which had ratified the Convention in 2009, was committed to fostering non-discrimination and equality for persons with disabilities. Awareness-raising campaigns had been launched at the local level to spread the message contained in the Convention. The articles had been translated into Creole and converted into child-friendly materials to ensure that children embraced diversity from an early age. Persons with disabilities were duly targeted by the campaigns to ensure that they were aware of their rights, participated in their dissemination, and played a leading role in advocacy efforts.
3. Persons with disabilities had been counted for the first time in the 2010 national census, which indicated that they accounted for about 3 per cent of the population. There was increasing recognition in Seychelles of the role that persons with disabilities could play in national development. The Government also recognized that their role was essential if developmental goals were to be achieved in an equitable manner.
4. Seychelles was proud of its ability to sustain free primary health care for all its citizens, and remained steadfast in its efforts to improve the quality of health-care services and to facilitate access to such services for persons with disabilities. The national health accounts showed that there had been a remarkable increase in the amount spent by the State on prevention programmes in recent years. The achievement of almost 100 per cent immunization coverage greatly assisted in keeping the number of persons with disabilities at a low level.
5. The Early Childhood Care and Education Framework had been launched in 2013 and an Institute of Early Childhood Development had been established to coordinate activities in that context, which had focused on early identification of risks and early intervention in the health, education and social sectors on behalf of children in the 0 to 8 age group. Three national action plans and various programmes and research projects had been developed. As a result, Seychelles had been recognized in 2017 as a regional leader in best practices in early childhood care and education by the International Bureau of Education of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
6. The Ministry of Education had launched a policy and an action plan on inclusive education. The Ministry was fully committed to their implementation despite the many challenges posed by the shortage of resources, particularly qualified human resources, in the disability sector.
7. The National Employment Policy adopted in 2014 promoted employment without discrimination, including for persons with disabilities. It had led to a marked improvement in the elaboration of job placement programmes, in rendering workplaces accessible, and in ensuring that persons with disabilities received equal pay for equal work. The Government was investing in an Unemployment Relief Scheme introduced in 2017, which actively sought to place persons with disabilities in skills development programmes.
8. Persons with disabilities had been extremely successful in sporting events, raising the country's flag high on different international podiums.
9. The Government had collaborated with NGOs over the years in implementing projects on behalf of persons with disabilities. For example, the Ministry of Education had cooperated with the Association for the Hearing Impaired in establishing a school for deaf persons and in developing a curriculum in the country's sign language. It had also concluded an agreement with Autism Seychelles and Autisme Reunion that had led to the participation of 179 school leaders and teachers from early childhood, primary and

secondary schools in training workshops on support for children with autism spectrum disorder. Training on autism had also been provided for 105 health-care professionals.

10. Action had been taken to promote universal design for public buildings, including new schools, hospitals and health-care centres, despite the delay in reviewing the Town and Country Planning Act. However, persons with disabilities continued to experience obstacles to the full enjoyment of their rights. One major barrier was that of mindset. It was assumed that persons with disabilities required protection, and persons with disabilities themselves continued to be overpowered by ideas of inadequacy.

11. Building an inclusive society and guaranteeing human rights for all required the involvement of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. Despite all efforts, the rallying cry of "Nothing about Us without Us" was not sufficiently respected by policymakers and planners. Sustainable development would not be achieved without the intentional inclusion of persons with disabilities. It was only by working together on an equal footing that shortcomings could be addressed.

12. As population ageing population in Seychelles was likely to lead to an increase in the number of persons with disabilities, it was essential to ensure that the country's programmes and services were in line with the provisions of the Convention. The barriers impeding the advancement of persons with disabilities could certainly be eliminated by taking the right action with the right amount of commitment.

13. **Mr. Pyaneandee** (Country Rapporteur), commending the State party on its introduction of a policy on inclusive education, said that he welcomed the use by the National Bureau of Statistics of the set of questions recommended by the Washington Group on Disability Statistics. It was regrettable, however, that the Committee had been unable to engage in a meaningful and fruitful dialogue with civil society representatives in the State party.

14. He noted that an act of parliament was required to incorporate international treaties into domestic legislation and that no such act had yet been adopted in respect of the Convention. Moreover, persons with disabilities played virtually no part in the formulation and implementation of policies and legislation, which currently failed to reflect the spirit and content of the Convention. As a result, the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights and of civil and political rights by persons with disabilities could not be deemed fair and equitable.

15. With regard to legal capacity, he enquired about the outcome of the State party's review of its Civil Code.

16. He noted that the Town and Country Planning Act had not been amended or repealed although it failed to ensure access for persons with disabilities to services, goods and, in particular, information and communication technology.

17. He said that he had serious concerns about employment, particularly the State party's failure to enact legislation aimed at eliminating all forms of discrimination.

Articles 1-10

18. **Mr. Kim Hyung Shik** asked which ministry was responsible for implementing the National Action Plan on Disability and enquired about the role played by the National Council for Disabled Persons. He asked whether organizations of persons with disabilities had been involved in its development and enquired about the results achieved to date in terms of legal rights, accessibility, employment, health care and education.

19. **Mr. Langvad** asked what measures had been taken to amend the definition of disability in Chapter III of the Seychelles Constitution, entitled the Seychellois Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, in order to align it with the rights-based approach to disability.

20. He requested updated information on political and legal measures to protect persons with disabilities who identified themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex, as well as women and girls with disabilities, from all forms of discrimination and violence.

21. He enquired about the number of women with disabilities in institutions and about measures to generate awareness among women with disabilities of their rights and the possibility of reporting cases of gender-related and disability-based discrimination.
22. He said that he would like to receive information regarding current and planned awareness-raising programmes to address stigma and negative social attitudes towards children with disabilities.
23. **Mr. Alsaif** asked whether any sign language versions of the Convention were available for the public in the State party.
24. He wished to know whether courses on universal design were part of the mandatory curriculum for engineers and designers in academic institutions and universities. Were sanctions imposed on entities or individuals who failed to comply with the principle of accessibility?
25. **Mr. Basharu**, noting that decision makers in the State party rarely engaged in consultations with persons with disabilities, said that he would be interested to learn of any measures taken to promote active consultation with their representative organizations.
26. He also enquired about awareness-raising programmes, especially in the media, to eliminate stereotypes and negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities and about the involvement of persons with disabilities in their planning and implementation.
27. **Mr. Kabue**, noting that a Revision Committee was seeking to align the Civil Code with the Constitution and the Convention, said that information would be appreciated on the composition of the Committee and the role that persons with disabilities were playing in the process.
28. He asked whether the State party could provide a time frame for the proposed review of the National Council for Disabled Persons Act.
29. Noting that the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal were the only avenues available to pursue cases of discrimination, he asked how accessible the courts were for persons with disabilities seeking remedies for violations of their rights. He also wished to know how many such cases had been addressed.
30. **Mr. Ruskus** said he was surprised to note that, according to the 2010 population census, persons with disabilities accounted for only 3 per cent of the State party's population, because global statistics indicated that they generally accounted for more than 10 per cent of countries' populations. He therefore enquired about disability determination procedures and the criteria for acquiring disability status.
31. He requested information on existing legislation and policies that expressly prohibited discrimination on the ground of disability and on any plans to adopt new legislation or policies on the subject. He asked whether the law recognized the denial of reasonable accommodation as a form of discrimination and, if not, whether steps would be taken to ensure such recognition.
32. The failure to prohibit corporal punishment of children in the home and in day-care centres, schools and correctional institutions constituted a violation of the rights of all children, including children with disabilities. He asked what steps had been taken to ensure that domestic legislation fully protected children from corporal punishment and to abolish the right to inflict so-called reasonable chastisement, including the right of teachers to administer what was termed proper punishment.
33. **Mr. Chaker** said that he would be grateful for information on strategies to promote the equal rights of women and girls with disabilities and their active participation, especially in the areas of education, employment and health, including sexual and reproductive health. He also enquired about measures to protect them from violence, including sexual violence and forced sterilization, especially women and girls with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities.
34. **Mr. You Liang** asked whether the State party provided financial support to representative organizations of persons with disabilities.

35. He enquired about measures taken to support the right of women and girls with disabilities to development, including their economic empowerment.

36. Noting that Seychelles was highly regarded as a tourism destination, he asked whether tourist itineraries were accessible, whether it was easy to find accessible rooms in hotels, especially for wheelchair users, and whether it was easy to find accessible toilets while travelling.

37. **Mr. Buntan** asked what measures had been taken by the State party to systematically involve persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in formulating laws and policies and in monitoring their implementation.

38. He noted that there were no legally binding regulations governing the accessibility of new buildings and that persons with disabilities had not been consulted on the matter through their representative organizations. He therefore requested an update on the review of the Town and Country Planning Act and enquired about the expected date of entry into force of the revised version. He asked what other measures had been taken to ensure that new buildings, especially schools and hospitals, were accessible.

39. He also wished to know whether any legislative or policy measures had been adopted to ensure access to print and digital media for persons with disabilities, including the promotion of sign language, Braille, and augmentative and alternative means of communication.

40. **Mr. Martin** asked what plans the State party had to raise awareness of the Convention among public servants, justice officials and the media. He wished to know whether persons with intellectual disabilities were part of the National Council for Disabled Persons and, if not, whether the State party intended to include them.

41. **Mr. Tatić** asked how many complaints of disability-based discrimination had been brought before the Constitutional Court and how many had been received under the Employment Act of 1995. Given that the legal framework on accessibility was not yet in place, he wished to know how the accessibility of new buildings, at the very least, was ensured in practice and whether there were any sanctions for failing to facilitate access. It would be interesting to know whether airports, transport, hotels and government buildings were accessible for wheelchair users.

42. **Mr. Pyaneandee** asked whether the State party intended to adopt a policy to counter negative stereotypes about persons with disabilities, in particular by ending the use of derogatory terms. He would appreciate an explanation of the concept of "reasonable provision" contained in article 36 of the Constitution, as well as information on plans to repeal or amend that article or to provide guidelines on its implementation as it was not in keeping with the Convention. How did the State party intend to correct the fact that women with disabilities were not included in any national plan of action on Women? Would the proposed policy and action plan on accessibility apply nationwide?

The meeting was suspended at 3.45 p.m. and resumed at 4.15 p.m.

43. **Ms. Simeon** (Seychelles) said that corporal punishment was prohibited in educational settings and that the Ministry of Family Affairs was working with the Attorney General's Office to repeal sections of the Children Act with a view to banning corporal punishment in all settings by the end of 2018. The current review of the Town and Country Planning Act did not prevent new constructions, including hotels, from being made subject to accessibility standards, in consultation with the National Council for Disabled Persons. While work remained to be done, the ministry responsible for tourism was engaging with investors to promote accessibility, and all hotel resort projects initiated since the ratification of the Convention had retained accessibility as a major focus. The airport was equipped with an elevator to provide access to aircraft. Furthermore, a process was under way to import at least five accessible buses and, though it would not be possible to put one on every route, there would be one in every region. As matters stood, the first four seats on every public transport vehicle were reserved for persons with disabilities and various systems had been installed on those vehicles to facilitate their use by blind or deaf passengers.

44. A number of campaigns had been run to raise awareness about violence against women, including the Orange Day Campaign, which took into account women with disabilities. The Government had adopted the Family Violence (Protection of Victims) Act in 2000, which facilitated applications for protection orders, and was developing a comprehensive legislative framework on gender-based violence, including domestic violence. The Ministry of Family Affairs had conducted a survey on domestic violence, on the basis of which it was designing an action plan that would address the needs of women with disabilities.

45. **Ms. Marguerite** (Seychelles) said that the delay in the review of the Civil Code was due in part to the fact that it was being reviewed in its entirety and consultatively. A white paper containing proposed amendments had been prepared and it was hoped that the amendments would be introduced that year. The term "reasonable provision" was interpreted to mean fair, proper or moderate accommodation depending on the circumstances. Any such provisions had to be taken with a view to promoting the greatest possible development of persons with disabilities. One example of a special provision was the amendment of the Social Security Act to allow persons with disabilities to retain a portion of their benefits when they took up employment.

46. It was true that, currently, international treaties were not directly applicable in domestic law; rather, the Government had to enact specific laws incorporating their provisions. While that approach enhanced coherence, it did complicate compliance with treaties. The Government acknowledged that the issue needed to be addressed and would strive to do so swiftly. A number of the provisions of the Constitution reflected the Government's commitment to the principles of equality and non-discrimination and met the requirements of international law in that regard.

47. Although the Town and Country Planning Act was still under review, disability-friendly specifications had already been incorporated into the revised version that was due to be submitted to the National Assembly in the first quarter of 2018. The revised Act, including the obligation to incorporate universal design principles into all new buildings, was expected to come into effect in June. There might not yet be any binding provisions on accessibility, but the planning authority did have a policy that had proven successful in advising contractors on their designs. As Seychelles was a small country, the university did not offer an architecture course, so all architects were trained abroad, where it was hoped that universal design was part of the curriculum.

48. **Mr. Simeon** (Seychelles) said that persons with disabilities accounted for a large proportion of the board of directors of the National Council for Disabled Persons, either directly or indirectly through their representatives, though the board did not currently include anyone with a mental disability. The Council was reviewing its strategic plan for the next three years, which would take into account abuse against persons with disabilities. One of the key messages coming out of consultations was that the Council needed to move beyond advocacy and take on a monitoring and regulatory role. For the moment, the only way to be certified as having a disability, and thus receive all associated social benefits, was through a medical assessment. Efforts were under way to move towards adherence to the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, but limited human resources were hindering the process.

49. **Ms. Marguerite** (Seychelles) said that the development of a national action plan on women was a work in progress as it had been decided that important stakeholders had been left out of the consultations on the original iteration of the plan. The role of the Ministry of Social Affairs was to provide a policy direction for the implementation of the plan. Seychelles faced challenges in terms of the collection of reliable data; currently, the primary source of data was occasional surveys. However, pursuant to the National Human Rights Action Plan, focal points had been appointed in various sectors in order to ensure that data were gathered on vulnerable groups. In addition, persons with disabilities had been included in the national census since 2010, following consultation with the National Council for Disabled Persons and the development of a form based on the work of the Washington Group on Disability Statistics. There were plans to improve the form in time for the next census in 2020, and the Council was preparing a pilot survey designed to shed greater light on the situation of persons with disabilities. No data were available on the

number of cases lodged by persons with disabilities with either the Constitutional Court or the competent employment tribunal.

50. She said that the Government had taken numerous steps to raise awareness of the provisions of the Convention. For example, several television programmes depicting the everyday lives of persons with disabilities in their local communities had been broadcast with a view to familiarizing the general public with disability issues.

51. Access to justice for persons with disabilities had improved greatly following the construction of a new, fully accessible courthouse. Procedural accommodation and sign language interpretation had also been made available for persons with disabilities during legal proceedings. Additional efforts would, however, be required to further strengthen the awareness of all stakeholders concerning the legal rights of persons with disabilities.

52. Apologizing for having missed the deadline for submission of the replies to the list of issues, she said that the Government had received the list of issues while preparing its State party report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and had been impeded in meeting the deadline by human resource and budgetary constraints.

53. Regarding the number of persons with disabilities identified in the 2010 census, she confirmed that the census data had been rigorously checked and were accurate. The low number of persons with disabilities living in the Seychelles was testament to the Government's strategy of strengthening access to early prevention services and free primary health care for all its citizens.

Articles 11–20

54. **Mr. Buntan** said that he would like to know more about the outcomes of the study to gather information on the preparedness of persons with disabilities in the event of natural disasters. It would be particularly useful in that context to receive updated information concerning the consultations held with the National Council for Disabled Persons which aimed to address the concerns of persons with disabilities and ensure that their specific needs were included in all plans devised by the Division of Risk and Disaster Management. Information on additional measures to bring the National Disaster Risk Management Plan and Strategy into line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 would also be welcome.

55. In regard to procedural accommodations made during legal proceedings, he wished to know what specific measures had been taken to guarantee effective access to justice for persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others. He also wondered what steps had been taken to protect persons with disabilities, especially women and girls with disabilities, against violence, exploitation and abuse and ensure that they had access to appropriate support and legal redress. How many of cases of violence or abuse against persons with disabilities had been reported and brought before the courts?

56. **Mr. Martin** asked whether the State party intended to repeal guardianship laws and promote supported decision-making for persons with disabilities. He also wished to know whether persons with disabilities could freely choose where and with whom they lived. Data on the numbers of persons living with their families or in institutions would be particularly useful in that context. He would also appreciate further information on the national efforts made to raise awareness of the right of persons with disabilities to live independently in their local communities.

57. **Mr. Langvad** said that he would like to know how many persons with disabilities had been subject to guardianship laws. What steps had been taken ensure that persons with disabilities had access to information on their legal rights in accessible formats? He also requested up-to-date information on the number of persons with disabilities currently residing in the home for the elderly at North East Point and the efforts made to enable those persons to live independently.

58. **Mr. Rukhledev** asked whether deaf persons in police custody had access to sign language interpretation upon arrest and during questioning, and if so, what measures had been adopted to ensure that the respective sign language interpreters were duly qualified.

59. **Mr. Chaker** asked what steps had been taken to prevent the torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment of persons with disabilities, including involuntary or forced medical treatment and the corporal punishment of children with disabilities.

60. **Mr. Basharu** asked whether the Government planned to reduce import duties on personal mobility equipment and make roads and pavements accessible for persons with disabilities, particularly blind persons or persons with visual impairments.

61. **Mr. Tatié**, welcoming the State party's efforts to provide sign language interpretation for deaf and hard-of-hearing persons during judicial and administrative proceedings, said that he would like to know how many qualified sign language interpreters were available in total in the Seychelles. He also sought clarification as to whether all legal proceedings involving persons with disabilities took place in the newly constructed, fully accessible courthouse, and if not, what procedural accommodations had been put in place in the other legal settings.

62. Regarding the right to live independently, he wished to know what measures had been adopted to increase the availability of community-based services for persons with disabilities who required round-the-clock assistance.

63. **Mr. Ruskus**, commending the measures taken by the State party to review the provisions of the Civil Code and the Mental Health Act 2006, asked whether similar efforts would be made to bring the Code of Criminal Procedure into line with the Convention and repeal the provisions on the detention of "persons of unsound mind". He also requested further information about the steps taken to review the provisions of the Children Act which enabled the Director of Social Services to assume parental rights over a child whose parent or guardian suffered from some "permanent disability" or "mental disorder" rendering them "unfit to take care of the child". Lastly, he wished to know what measures would be taken to repeal all national residency application processes that discriminated directly or indirectly on the grounds of disability, particularly Regulation 2 of the Immigration Decree on application for residence permits which stated that applicants and their family members must provide a medical certificate proving that they were "not mentally disordered or physically defective in any way".

64. **Mr. Babu** said that he would appreciate specific examples of the efforts made to include the rights of women and girls with disabilities in the National Strategy on Domestic Violence 2008–2012. He also wished to know what steps had been taken to ensure that persons with disabilities could travel freely between the islands that made up the Seychelles.

65. **Mr. Lovász** asked whether the newly constructed, fully accessible courthouse provided captioning services and audio induction loops for deaf and hard-of-hearing persons. He also wished to know whether reporting mechanisms such as accessible hotlines had been established for persons with all types of disabilities so that they could report acts of violence or abuse in an effective and confidential manner. He would particularly welcome confirmation as to whether the Convention had been translated into Creole sign language.

66. **M. Alsaif** asked what measures had been taken to increase the amount of community-based support available so that persons with disabilities could live independently and participate in the community.

67. **Mr. Kabue** said that he would like to know whether, following the study to gather information on the preparedness of persons with disabilities in the event of natural disasters, steps had been taken to provide advance warnings of natural disasters to blind and deaf persons, and if so, what form they took. In the light of the State party's review of the Mental Health Act 2006, he wondered whether similar efforts would be made to eliminate all discriminatory provisions that restricted the rights of persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities to enter into contracts, vote, marry and take decisions concerning their health and finances.

68. **Mr. Kim Hyung Shik** asked what measures had been adopted to repeal the provisions of the Mental Health Act 2006 that permitted the involuntary hospitalization and institutionalization of persons with disabilities on the basis of their actual or perceived

impairment. It would be particularly useful to receive updated information on the number of persons with disabilities living in institutions and the overall progress made towards their deinstitutionalization. Lastly, he wished to know whether the National Strategy on Domestic Violence 2008–2012 and the National Action Plan on Gender-based Violence 2010–2011 took into account the specific needs and concerns of women and girls with disabilities.

69. **Mr. Pyaneandee** asked what steps had been taken to promote the active participation of persons with disabilities in the legal system and repeal article 228 (b) of the Code of Criminal Procedure which exempted persons with disabilities from jury service on the grounds of their disability. He also wished to know what measures would be adopted to bring the revised Civil Code into line with the Convention and uphold the right of persons with disabilities to enter into contracts, marry and inherit property.

70. **The Chair** asked whether there was a mechanism in place to monitor the support and assistance provided to persons with disabilities who were victims of domestic violence and abuse.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 5.20 p.m.



Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Distr.: General
2 March 2018

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Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Nineteenth session

Summary record of the 378th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 27 February 2018, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Degener

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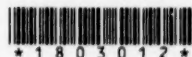
Consideration of reports submitted by parties to the Convention under article 35 (*continued*)

Initial report of Seychelles (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by parties to the Convention under article 35
(continued)

Initial report of Seychelles (continued) (CRPD/C/SYC/1; CRPD/C/SYC/Q/1 and CRPD/C/SYC/Q/1/Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Seychelles took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Ms. Simeon** (Seychelles) said that the Ministry of Family Affairs was designing a new five-year action plan based on the outcomes of the review of the action plan on domestic violence for the period 2008–2011 and the survey of gender-based violence conducted in 2016. In contrast to the previous one, the new action plan would make provision for specialized services to assist persons with disabilities who were victims of domestic or gender-based violence in seeking medical attention and legal redress.
3. With regard to the planned shelter for victims of domestic violence, the Government had set aside a parcel of land and was seeking a private-sector partner with which to undertake construction in the next two years. The needs of victims of violence who were living with disabilities would be taken into account.
4. Persons with disabilities had the right to enter into marriage under the conditions laid down in the Civil Code, provided that there was consent between the parties.
5. **Ms. Marguerite** (Seychelles) said that a Mental Health Advisory Committee had been set up to review the Mental Health Act. Persons with disabilities and their families had taken part in discussions on the content of the amendment bill, the aim of which was to ensure that persons with mental health illness made decisions about their own care insofar as they were able to do so. Under the proposed amendments, the State would have an obligation to provide persons with mental health illness with access to information in a format that they could understand.
6. The bill also included provisions aimed at the establishment of two new bodies, the first of which, the Mental Health Board, would oversee the planning and management of the provision of mental health care, while the second, the Mental Health Care Tribunal, would have jurisdiction to determine matters relating to mental health. The bill also contained provisions to protect people from forced medical treatment. For admissions of longer than 14 days, authorization would be required from the Tribunal, taking as the primary consideration the well-being of the person concerned.
7. Seychelles had only one institution for persons with disabilities, a mental health-care facility which currently housed 39 individuals, 18 of whom were women. Placement in the facility occurred as a last resort, in cases where a person's family was unwilling or unable to provide care.
8. The questionnaire used in the survey on disability and disaster preparedness had been adapted from one designed by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. The aim of the survey had been to identify the types of risk faced by persons with disabilities and the knowledge they had about disaster preparedness. The results had shown that a significant proportion of respondents were unwilling to participate in the planning and management of disasters. The authorities had subsequently sought to raise awareness of the importance of doing so. Alerts from the early warning system were communicated in sign language on State television.
9. **Mr. Simeon** (Seychelles) said that the domiciliary care scheme formed part of the State's strategy to ensure that individuals were able to remain in their own home rather than living in institutions. Under the scheme, older persons and persons with disabilities received assistance with daily tasks such as personal hygiene and taking medication. If required, support could be provided up to 24 hours a day. A means-testing assessment was used to determine how much, if any, funding the Government would contribute towards the cost of an individual's care.

10. The domiciliary care scheme was currently undergoing major reforms aimed at the professionalization of the service. With input from the Ministry of Health and other partners, a standardized training programme was being designed in order to ensure that home carers' skills matched the needs of the persons to whom they provided assistance.

11. Wheelchairs were wholly exempt from customs and excise duties and VAT, while adapted vehicles were exempt from customs and excise duties but were subject to environmental levies and VAT. The Government often imported mobility aids in bulk and made special arrangements with the Ministry of Finance in order to waive taxes on the items.

12. Transportation between islands was possible by plane or ferry. The steep steps up to the small aircraft serving inter-island routes posed difficulties for persons using wheelchairs or crutches. Work had been done to make ferries more easily accessible: ramps had been installed on jetties to facilitate boarding and disembarkation, and persons with mobility impairments could easily move around the lower floors of ferries.

13. **Ms. Marguerite** (Seychelles) said that work to modify the Children Act was ongoing. The Government placed great importance on the principle of the best interests of the child, which was adhered to in decisions on custodial guardianship of children. Applications for children to be removed from their parents were made only as a last resort and were based on the level of risk a child faced. Parents with disabilities who were able to raise their children without putting them at risk were free to do so.

14. The Association of People with Hearing Impairment was developing a Seychellois Sign Language dictionary, which was due to be published in May 2018. With support from the European Union, the Association had trained four sign language interpreters and two deaf mediators to work in legal institutions and assist deaf persons who were in conflict with the law, including during court appearances. Interpreters were monitored by an oversight committee comprised of a lawyer, a deaf person and a member of the Association of People with Hearing Impairment.

15. In the area of accessibility to justice, the modern court building was fully accessible to persons with physical disabilities. However, the Government recognized that more needed to be done to improve accessibility to information for a wider range of persons with disabilities.

16. Several hotlines were operated in Seychelles, for purposes such as reporting child abuse, but not every hotline was accessible to all persons with disabilities. Much work remained to be done in that regard. In Seychelles, jurors were selected at random, with no prior knowledge of whether those selected had disabilities. However, she would need to seek further clarification on the matter in order to give an adequate response to the Committee's questions in that regard.

17. Her Government recognized that it must carry out further work to ensure the economic independence of persons with disabilities. In school, pupils with disabilities learned essential skills for daily life, such as financial management, and some career guidance was available. The Vocational Unit of the National Council for Disabled Persons ran a programme on life skills. One of the obstacles to her Government's efforts to ensure the economic independence of persons with disabilities had been the unwillingness of some persons to take up employment in the knowledge that they would lose their disability benefits. To remove that obstacle, the Social Security Act had been amended in such a way that persons with disabilities could no longer be denied their benefits in the event they found gainful employment. Her Government also encouraged persons with disabilities to set up cottage industries and ensured their access to grants and loans to facilitate self-employment.

Articles 21–33

18. **Mr. Martin** said that he would welcome information on the State party's plans to provide public information in accessible formats, such as Braille, sign language and Easy Read, in accordance with article 21. Regarding article 25, it would be interesting to know whether the State party provided any specific training for health professionals on the health

needs of persons with intellectual disabilities, who had poorer health outcomes in many countries. Lastly, in relation to article 29, he wished to know whether all disabled persons, including persons with intellectual disabilities, were able to vote in Seychelles. It was important to provide information about how to vote in accessible formats.

19. **Mr. Buntan** said that he wished to know what legal status sign language and Braille held in Seychelles. With regard to article 24, he would be grateful for information on any specific measures that the State party had taken or planned to take under its National Inclusive Education Policy and Action Plan to ensure that students with disabilities, especially those who were blind, deaf or blind-deaf, or had intellectual disabilities, were able to learn certain essential skills, such as the ability to understand Braille and sign language or technical sign language, or any other communications skills they needed to participate actively in the mainstream school setting. He would also appreciate information on any specific measures or time frames adopted by Seychelles to move towards the ratification and implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled. Lastly, he wondered whether the delegation could provide information on any measures taken by Seychelles to ensure that persons with disabilities could participate fully in the monitoring of the implementation of the Convention through their representative organizations.

20. **Mr. Tatić** said that he wished to commend the sincerity of the delegation of Seychelles in replying to the Committee's questions. The initial report of Seychelles (CRPD/C/SYC/1) had been one of the few reports submitted to the Committee at its 19th session to include the challenges facing the State party as part of its structure. That practice could be emulated by other States parties in the future. Regarding article 24, he would appreciate information on the measures taken by Seychelles to facilitate access to tertiary education for students with disabilities, including any efforts to remove physical barriers and to provide for the use of Braille and sign language. He would also welcome further information on the incentives provided to persons with disabilities to facilitate their self-employment, including information regarding the resources offered and the level of interest shown by persons with disabilities. In addition, he would be grateful for further information on accessible tourism in Seychelles.

21. **Mr. You Liang** said that, according to the State party's initial report, entry into post-secondary and tertiary education was awarded on a competitive basis in Seychelles. He therefore wished to know what measures had been taken to improve the quality of the education offered to children with disabilities as a means of facilitating their access to higher education, which would in turn increase their chances of dignified employment on the open labour market. Persons with disabilities had been recognized as a vulnerable group under the National Strategic Plan on Sexual and Reproductive Health 2012–2016, but no specific programmes tailored to their needs had been made available. He therefore wondered if the State party planned to promulgate a new iteration of that plan so as to provide individualized health care for persons with disabilities. Regarding article 28, it would be interesting to hear about any poverty reduction programmes tailored to persons with disabilities, particularly women and older persons with disabilities. The Committee would also appreciate information on any action taken by the State party to include disability-related issues in its efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to attain the Sustainable Development Goals. In relation to article 29, he would welcome information regarding the number of persons with disabilities who had been elected to parliament in Seychelles and any proposals made by those persons that had been translated into reality.

22. **Mr. Alsaif** said that he would welcome clarification on the measures taken by the State party to ensure that persons with disabilities had access to health care, including physical health-care facilities and equipment and information on the provision of health services. He would also appreciate an explanation of the way in which free access to medicines and supplies was guaranteed for the persons with disabilities who needed them. With regard to article 32, he was interested to know about any plans elaborated as part of the State party's efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that expressly included the rights of persons with disabilities.

23. **Mr. Chaker** said that he wished to know how the State party ensured that all persons with disabilities were able to exercise their rights to marriage, family and parenthood and to access education and sexual and reproductive health services on an equal basis with other persons. He would also appreciate information on measures taken in the State party to ensure that parents were not separated from their children for reasons of disability.

24. **Mr. Parra Dussan** said that he wished to know how and in what circumstances it was deemed appropriate for children with disabilities to be taken out of inclusive education and placed in special education. He wondered whether the delegation could inform the Committee how many children with disabilities were enrolled in both systems. With regard to article 27, he would appreciate clarification on how regular work was compatible with disability benefit. It would be interesting to know more about the amendment made to the Social Security Act to ensure that persons with disabilities could take up open employment, rather than only sheltered employment, without losing their disability benefits.

25. **Mr. Rukhledev** said that he was interested to know whether the State party planned to set up any programmes focusing on the use of information and communication technologies to facilitate access to information for persons with disabilities. In relation to article 24, he wished to know whether the State party ran any training programmes to teach teachers and other education specialists how to work with persons with disabilities and whether teachers and students with disabilities were involved in that work. Regarding article 29, he would appreciate further information on the accessibility of polling places. Lastly, with regard to article 30, he wondered whether Seychelles had any State-run sports programmes for persons with disabilities, particularly children with disabilities, and any programmes to support the involvement of persons with disabilities in creative and cultural life.

26. **Mr. Basharu** said that it would be interesting to hear about any measures taken by the State party to provide incentives to persons with disabilities who wished to import mobility and assistive devices, such as reductions in customs duties. Furthermore, he wished to know whether the State party had taken any steps to make its road and boat networks accessible to persons who were blind or had motor impairments.

27. **Mr. Ishikawa** said that he wondered whether Creole Braille had been developed in Seychelles. If it had, it would be interesting to know whether it was taught in schools or in rehabilitation centres. He also wished to know whether the State party provided subsidies to persons with disabilities who wished to purchase assistive devices, such as Braille note-takers and screen-readers. With regard to education, it would be useful to know how many experts were able to assess autism spectrum disorders in Seychelles. In relation to article 29, he wished to know whether polling places were accessible to wheelchair users and whether persons with disabilities who could not write by hand could ask a member of their family, a friend or a member of staff at the polling place whom they trusted to assist them to cast their vote.

28. **Mr. Kim Hyung Shik** said that he wished to know how the State party enabled persons with disabilities to move from sheltered employment to the general workforce, how it supported those workers and what sort of vocational training it provided that might lead to gainful employment. He also wished to know how the average wage of economically active persons with disabilities compared to that of other workers.

29. **Mr. Pyaneandee** said that he would appreciate information on how the State party continued to support athletes with disabilities and how it planned to promote inclusive sporting and leisure activities. With regard to article 32, he wished to know what kind of memorandums of understanding or international cooperation agreements the State party had concluded or intended to conclude as part of its efforts to implement the Convention. Lastly, he was interested to know when the State party intended to strengthen its National Human Rights Commission and whether the latter would be empowered to investigate complaints.

The meeting was suspended at 11.05 a.m. and resumed at 11.35 a.m.

30. **Ms. Simeon** (Seychelles) said that the National Sports Council organized sports activities that were open to all persons with disabilities. It also ran a rehabilitation

programme for wheelchair users and helped athletes with disabilities to prepare for national and international sports competitions.

31. Persons with disabilities from Seychelles had taken part in the 2016 Paralympic Games and had won several medals at the 2015 Indian Ocean Island Games. The Paralympic Association of Seychelles was affiliated with the International Paralympic Committee. Representatives of the Committee had visited Seychelles to share information and expertise. Sports coaches and senior members of the Paralympic Association had attended capacity-building workshops in Germany, sponsored by the Agitos Foundation.

32. Various initiatives relating to the provision of training on special educational needs were outlined in paragraph 22 of her country's replies to the list of issues (CRPD/C/SYC/Q/1/Add.1). Autism assessments were carried out at the Early Childhood Intervention Centre by a multidisciplinary team of five persons, including two psychologists and a speech pathologist. The assessment process had been established as part of a project to raise awareness about autism and develop services for persons with autism and their families. Diagnostic tools had been purchased and the professionals involved had received training from an American psychologist specializing in autism spectrum disorders.

33. Ballot papers were not available in Braille. Steps would be taken to remedy that shortcoming in order to ensure that all persons with disabilities could exercise their right to vote if they had been certified as mentally able to do so.

34. **Mr. Simeon** (Seychelles) said that the Government aimed to provide quality services to all tourists, including those with disabilities. Large hotels and resorts were already accessible to persons with disabilities; steps were now being taken to ensure that smaller facilities were also accessible. Improvements of that kind would benefit not only foreign tourists but also Seychellois with disabilities.

35. The Agency for Social Protection provided financial assistance to persons with disabilities, such as disability benefits, which were designed not to discourage persons with disabilities from taking up employment but rather to encourage them to become economically active. It also provided housing grants, which could be used to repair or renovate existing housing or to construct new housing in order to cater for the needs of persons with disabilities.

36. Steps had been taken to provide accessible student accommodation. Home carers and nurses who conducted home visits ensured that persons with disabilities received the health care that they required.

37. Some mobility devices, such as wheelchairs, were exempt from all taxes. Others, such as adapted vehicles, were subject to environmental and sales taxes but exempt from customs duties. The Government imported assistive devices of that kind and ensured that the relevant tax exemptions were applied.

38. **Ms. Marguerite** (Seychelles) said that the training provided for health professionals by the National Institute for Health and Social Studies included a module on disability issues. Training for home carers was organized by the Ministry of Family Affairs, in partnership with the Ministry of Health.

39. Health services were increasingly being decentralized to improve their accessibility to persons with disabilities. Various activities were organized, such as a physical exercise campaign led by the President, to encourage all people to take responsibility for their health and for the health of their loved ones.

40. The Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy contained a section on persons with disabilities, which would be updated in the light of the Committee's recommendations. Talks on HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health had been held for persons with disabilities, including students of the School for the Exceptional Child, and activities relating to sexual and reproductive health had been organized for trainees of the Vocational Unit of the National Council for Disabled Persons. The curriculum of the School for the Exceptional Child included personal and social education. New health

centres were built in accordance with the principle of universal design and some posters on health issues were produced in Braille.

41. Assistive devices, such as special software and adapted furniture, were available in mainstream schools. A special needs resources room had been set up in at least one mainstream school and there were plans to set up similar rooms in other schools. Measures were taken on a case-by-case basis to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities during lessons and school examinations.

42. Efforts would be made to improve the accessibility of health and education services, in accordance with the Committee's recommendations.

43. More efforts were being made to educate girls with disabilities about sexual and reproductive health issues, including through programmes conducted in both special and mainstream schools. Persons both with and without disabilities could access and consent to receive reproductive health services provided that they had reached the age of majority and were capable of understanding the information provided to them. Persons both with and without disabilities who had not yet reached the age of majority were required to obtain parental consent to benefit from such services.

44. Although a number of workshops on the rights of persons with disabilities had already been organized for health workers, more needed to be done to change perceptions among persons working in the health-care sector. To the extent possible, assistive devices were provided free of charge to persons in need of them. The Ministry of Health, which kept a list of all the persons requiring such devices and was responsible for their distribution, received support from multiple sponsors and donors. Work was under way to develop guidelines for the provision of adjustable beds and other selected assistive devices. Private companies also assisted in the provision of personal mobility aids. An initiative to ensure that special needs children aged between 0 and 8 years were provided with the necessary assistive devices had also been undertaken. To date, a total of 26 special needs children had benefited from the initiative, which was still ongoing.

45. As to the role played by NGOs in monitoring the situation of persons with disabilities in the Seychelles, there were several NGOs that were very active in promoting and protecting the rights of those persons and that worked closely with the Government to that end. The Government supported the work of less visible NGOs working in the area of disability rights through the allocation of grants. It was hoped that more NGOs would become more active in advocating and promoting the rights of persons with disabilities.

46. The National Human Rights Commission served as the independent monitoring mechanism for the rights of persons with disabilities. Regrettably, the issues relating to the accessibility of the Commission's premises had not yet been resolved. The Government was in the process of reviewing the legal frameworks governing the National Human Rights Commission and the Office of the Ombudsman with a view to strengthening them and bringing them fully into line with the Paris Principles.

47. **Ms. Simeon** (Seychelles), replying to questions posed in relation to article 24 of the Convention, said that, as a general rule, children with mild disabilities were placed in mainstream schools. The majority of children with developmental delays were diagnosed as having a disability and were admitted, at least initially, to such establishments. In some cases, those children were assigned a classroom assistant to support them during the school day. Over the past three years, between 4 and 8 children per year had been admitted directly to a special school upon becoming eligible for preschool enrolment. Those children tended to have congenital disabilities, such as Down syndrome, or autism spectrum disorder. The needs and abilities of those children were assessed and every effort was made to place them in a mainstream school, taking into account the resources available. Children with disabilities who had initially been admitted to a mainstream school could later attend a special school on a part-time or full-time basis as the development gap between them and their peers without disabilities widened or the mainstream curriculum became too demanding. Trainee teachers were also required to observe and take part in lessons in special schools as part of their mandatory training.

48. **Ms. Marguerite** (Seychelles), replying to questions posed in relation to articles 9, 27, 29, 30 and 32 of the Convention, said that sign language and Braille did not yet have legal status in the Seychelles. The Government would give due consideration to the Committee's recommendation in relation to the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled. Although there were currently no elected parliamentarians with disabilities, persons with disabilities were represented on the Seychelles National Youth Assembly. Recognizing the important role of information and communication technology in promoting accessibility in education, the Government had undertaken a project to identify the information and communication technology needs of students with disabilities in order to provide them with appropriate assistive devices. The project was still ongoing and the Government was seeking out ways to update existing assistive technologies to better respond to the evolving needs of those students.

49. As to the participation of persons with disabilities in the cultural life of the country, each district had a support group for persons with disabilities that organized a variety of community-based activities. Given the small size of the country, district support groups were also involved in organizing leisure and cultural activities at the regional and national levels.

50. Regarding measures to promote the economic empowerment of persons with disabilities, the Small Enterprise Promotion Agency, which was responsible for the implementation of government policy on craft and cottage industries in the Seychelles, supported persons with disabilities wishing to carry out related entrepreneurial activities at home. The Agency did not provide potential entrepreneurs with actual funding, rather it provided them with access to funding, in addition to support services. Persons with disabilities could also apply for funding from the Seychelles Business Financing Agency, which could provide small business owners with concessionary loans of up to \$22,000. Also available to persons with disabilities who met the requirements was the Seed Capital start-up grant, which was intended to assist small businesses in the early stages of development. Persons with disabilities who had an idea for a small business were particularly encouraged to apply for the grant in question.

51. The lack of accessibility of the national road network was largely attributable to the country's topography. However, improvements had been made to the urban portion of the network, particularly in areas where schools were located, and to local road infrastructure, such as pavements, in order to make them more accessible to persons with disabilities. While some progress had been made, more needed to be done in that area.

52. As to international cooperation, the Government had worked in partnership with Leonard Cheshire Disability and Rehabilitation International and had obtained funding from a variety of donors to support the development of programmes and projects intended to benefit persons with disabilities. However, as Seychelles was now considered to be a high-income country, it often struggled to attract donors and to access funding. The Government continued to draw the international community's attention to the country's vulnerable situation and to the need for technical assistance to support its efforts to progress in the area of human rights.

53. **Ms. Simeon** (Seychelles), replying to a question posed in relation to articles 29 and 30 of the Convention, said that professional musicians and artists with disabilities had enjoyed considerable success in the Seychelles, not to mention private-sector business executives.

54. **Mr. Simeon** (Seychelles), replying to questions on articles 21 and 29 of the Convention, said that the National Council for Disabled Persons recognized the importance of taking the views of persons with disabilities into account when designing policies and interventions concerning them and the need for improvement in that area. The representation of persons with disabilities through their own organizations and NGOs that were members of the Council was not sufficient; there was a need to gain a deeper understanding of their views and aspirations.

55. **Ms. Simeon** (Seychelles) said that she wished to thank the members of the Committee for the frankness of the dialogue; the recommendations and suggestions that

they had made would undoubtedly assist the Government in reviewing its current state of compliance with the Convention and in mapping the way forward. The Government was aware of the need for all stakeholders to work together to create an environment conducive to the full realization of the rights of persons with disabilities. It remained committed to reducing gaps in accessibility, addressing persisting barriers in its legal and policy frameworks, improving the quality of education by adopting a more rights-based approach, strengthening the application of the inclusive approach to education and fostering non-discrimination at all levels with the full participation of persons with disabilities. To that end, it had begun the process of aligning several laws with the Convention, reforming the National Council for Disabled Persons and strengthening its partnerships with NGOs. It would persevere in its efforts to enable persons with disabilities to live up to their full potential and to exercise their rights without restriction.

56. **Mr. Pyaneandee**, noting that the State party had made significant progress in advancing women's rights and in increasing their representation in all major sectors, said that it should do likewise for persons with disabilities. He found it regrettable that the Committee had been unable to have an interactive dialogue with organizations of persons with disabilities and hoped that what was a highly unsatisfactory situation could be remedied in the future. The State party should address, as a matter of urgency, the constitutional deficiencies having a negative impact on persons with disabilities. Although the improvement in the State party's economic indicators was a welcome development, it would do well to remember that a flourishing economy was largely dependent on good human rights indicators. Going forward, it should harness international cooperation to enhance the implementation of the Convention and thus facilitate the enjoyment by persons with disabilities of all their human rights.

57. **The Chair**, thanking the delegation for the open and constructive dialogue, said that she hoped that the Committee's suggestions and recommendations would further guide the State party in its commitment to the rights of persons with disabilities.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.



Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Nineteenth session

Summary record of the 379th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 27 February 2018, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Degener

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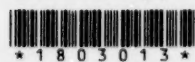
Consideration of reports submitted by parties to the Convention under article 35 (*continued*)

Initial report of the Russian Federation

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by parties to the Convention under article 35
(continued)

Initial report of the Russian Federation (CRPD/C/RUS/1; CRPD/C/RUS/Q/1 and CRPD/C/RUS/Q/1/Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of the Russian Federation took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Mr. Lekarev** (Russian Federation) said that his country's initial report (CRPD/C/RUS/1) highlighted the changes made to State policy since the ratification of the Convention with a view to adopting a human rights approach to disability. Legislation had been enacted to prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability and efforts had been made to bring the national concept of disability closer into line with the definition contained in the Convention. Changes had been made to the codes of civil and criminal procedure and numerous other laws in order to ensure that persons with disabilities could participate in the life of society on an equal basis with other citizens. A set of oversight bodies had been designated to ensure compliance with national accessibility requirements for persons with disabilities. Over the previous two years, they had recorded and investigated some 39,000 violations of the rights of persons with disabilities. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation, which functioned as an independent mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the Convention, had also investigated and addressed several cases of discrimination against persons with disabilities during that period.
3. The Government had recently introduced a national disability register with the aim of identifying the barriers facing persons with disabilities and ensuring that they had access to more targeted and effective support. It had also taken steps to encourage deinstitutionalization and make other forms of care and assistance available, such as day centres and mobile support units. In addition, it had launched nationwide initiatives to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society. The State viewed effective rehabilitation in combination with appropriate adaptation of the environment as the key to successful inclusion of persons with disability. Accordingly, a number of initiatives had been adopted to create a barrier-free society. Efforts had been made to support the inclusion of persons with disabilities in their local communities and promote their education and employment. New national building regulations and vehicle manufacturing guidelines had been introduced that took into account the specific accessibility needs of persons with disabilities. Training had been provided to personnel in many sectors who were responsible for providing services to persons with disabilities. Some \$7.5 billion — an unprecedented level of financing — had been earmarked for the Accessible Environment Programme, the main instrument for implementing the barrier-free access policy. In the first five years of the Programme more than 18,000 facilities had been adapted for persons with disabilities. The number of schools providing inclusive education had risen, and 60 per cent of children with disabilities were currently enrolled in such schools.
4. Subsidies of around \$25 million per year had been provided to organizations of persons with disabilities with a view to supporting their activities and promoting the rights of persons with disabilities. Incentives had also been offered to companies that employed persons with disabilities. As a result of those measures, some 30 per cent of persons with disabilities had been able to find work.
5. The Russian Federation had recently ratified the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled and had taken the necessary steps to implement its provisions. Since 2018, efforts had been made to increase the availability of sign language interpreters and captioning services and to provide assistive devices to persons with hearing and visual impairments.
6. **Ms. Goncharenko** (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation) said that persons with disabilities in the Russian Federation continued to face difficulties in accessing appropriate rehabilitation services and equipment. A pilot

project had recently been launched which offered persons with disabilities the chance to purchase rehabilitation equipment directly, without having to wait to obtain such equipment through the social insurance system. The High Commissioner monitored the rights of persons with disabilities living in institutions and had made concrete recommendations aimed at deinstitutionalizing care and enabling persons with disabilities to participate and live independently in their local communities.

7. In 2017, there had been some 20,000 persons with disabilities in the prison system. The High Commissioner had worked to ensure that they received appropriate medical and social support during their period of imprisonment. An interagency working group made up of representatives from the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice, the prison service, human rights organization and the scientific community had also drafted a bill providing for the release of seriously ill persons from prison.

8. The rights of women with disabilities were protected under domestic legislation on social protection and women's rights. However, the High Commissioner was of the view that the legal provisions governing adoption and guardianship were discriminatory towards some women with disabilities, as they contained a list of illnesses that rendered it impossible for persons with category I disabilities to adopt a child or serve as foster parents, despite the fact that biological parents with that category of disability coped perfectly well with their parental responsibilities.

9. There were a number of organizations of persons with disabilities in the Russian Federation. On 14 December 2017, a coordinating council of Russian human rights commissioners had adopted a resolution calling on the Government to draw up a list of issues on which the views of such organizations must be taken into account in public decision-making processes. Since the ratification of the Convention, considerable effort had been made to enhance accessibility and create suitable living conditions to enable persons with disabilities to participate in public life, but much remained to be done. The Commissioner would continue to use all available means to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities in the Russian Federation.

10. **Mr. Tatić** (Country Rapporteur) said that the Russian Federation had made great strides in improving accessibility and ensuring access to justice for persons with disabilities whose rights had been violated. It was heartening to know that the highest courts in the country took note of the Committee's jurisprudence. Despite those commendable measures, however, the State party continued to take a largely medical approach to disability, as evidenced by its focus on rehabilitation. A large number of persons with disabilities still lived in institutions, in some cases against their will. That was particularly true of persons with intellectual impairments and psychosocial conditions. Substitute decision-making for persons with disabilities remained prevalent, which was of concern. He looked forward to a constructive exchange of views with the delegation on those and other issues.

11. **Mr. Lovász** (Country Rapporteur), noting that the dialogue offered an opportunity for the delegation and the Committee to learn from one another in an atmosphere of mutual respect and good will, said that the Committee's aim was to improve the situation of persons with disabilities in the Russian Federation and to identify areas for improvement in the State party's implementation of the Convention. The discussion would focus, *inter alia*, on issues relating to communication, mobility, legal safeguards in institutions, adoption procedures, inclusive education, rehabilitation and early screening services, and legal protections for persons with disabilities. He looked forward to a fruitful and constructive dialogue.

Articles 1–10

12. **Mr. Kim Hyung Shik** asked what steps had been taken to adopt a human rights approach to disability and bring the definition of disability contained in national legislation into line with the Convention. Information on the definition of disability used by the national disability register would also be welcome. He would like to know how many cases of discrimination against persons with disabilities had been reported and what the outcome of those cases had been. It would also be interesting to learn whether national legislation had been amended so as to better protect the rights of the most vulnerable groups of persons

with disabilities, including women and girls, members of ethnic minorities and persons with neurological and psychosocial disorders.

13. **Mr. Ishikawa** said that he would like to know what efforts had been made to involve organizations of persons with disabilities in policy-making processes at the federal, provincial and municipal levels. As he understood it, the Russian word used to refer to a person with a disability was "invalid". He wondered whether measures were envisaged to change the definition of disability and the terminology used to talk about it and whether steps would be taken to bring national legislation and policies into line with the Convention.

14. **Mr. Alsaif** asked whether the State party intended to amend its laws to prohibit intersectional discrimination against women and girls with disabilities. He would appreciate updated information on the anti-violence measures referred to in paragraph 50 of the State party's replies to the list of issues (CRPD/C/RUS/Q/1/Add.1). Regarding accessibility, it would be interesting to know how persons with disabilities and their representative organizations were involved in relevant training. He would also like to hear how the State Information Society Programme for 2011–2020 was being implemented, what steps were being taken to create a barrier-free environment nationwide and whether there were plans to set up a call centre that provided sign language interpretation and to expand the use of Easy Read.

15. **Mr. Kabue** said that the array of legislative changes the State party had already made in relation to disability issues was impressive. He would appreciate further information on the types of violations of the rights of persons with disabilities that had been recorded and what action had been taken in response. Noting reports of discrepancies between the law and practice with regard to the services provided to persons with disabilities, he asked how the State party ensured that persons with disabilities were aware of the various programmes available and whether organizations of persons with disabilities were involved in raising awareness of new measures.

16. **Mr. Ruskus** said that he shared Mr. Ishikawa's concern about the term "invalid" and wished to know what steps were being taken to replace it and other outdated terms, such as "mental retardation", with terms that were more in line with the Convention. He also wished to know what efforts were being made to adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that encompassed all grounds for discrimination, including disability. He would be grateful to receive information on the steps taken to avoid the institutionalization of children with disabilities and promote their inclusion in society and in mainstream health and educational settings. In particular, what steps was the Government taking to prioritize family-based care and to develop a time-bound plan for deinstitutionalization?

17. **Mr. Langvad** asked what action the State party was taking to prevent lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons with psychosocial disabilities from being subjected to forced treatment.

18. **Mr. Martin** asked whether persons with intellectual disabilities had a dedicated representative organization. If not, how did the State party ensure that their voices were heard and what was it doing to encourage self-advocacy? He would also like to hear about any plans to raise awareness of disability issues with a view to overcoming prejudice and stereotypes.

19. He wished to point out that the language used to talk about persons with disabilities was extremely important. Some terms could make the persons concerned feel inferior and disrespected and perpetuated negative stereotypes. They could also be used to segregate persons with disabilities from the rest of the population. Words like "special" and "invalid" carried connotations that were demeaning and not representative of the reality of living with a disability. He urged the State party to use terms that were in line with the Convention and that had been agreed upon by persons with disabilities.

20. **Mr. You Liang**, noting the importance of including persons with disabilities in State party delegations, said that it appeared that few children with disabilities were educated in mainstream schools in the Russian Federation. He wished to know what steps had been taken to allocate more resources to and improve the quality of inclusive education. It would

also be helpful to know whether children with disabilities living in institutions were provided with adequate health care, nutrition and rehabilitation services. In addition, he would welcome information on the financial support made available to families in order to enhance the accessibility of their homes.

21. **Mr. Lovász** said that he would appreciate further explanations on the biopsychosocial model referred to in paragraph 23 of the State party's replies to the list of issues. In particular, he wished to know how it embodied a human rights approach to disability. He would also appreciate an explanation of the concept of "limited health" as it related to the access of children with disabilities to education. It would be useful to know what services were available for parents of children with disabilities in order to avoid institutionalization. He was curious to know whether a monitoring mechanism was in place to gauge client satisfaction with sign language interpretation services. Commending the State party for ratifying the Marrakesh Treaty, he asked whether a strategy for its implementation, including a fixed time frame, had been adopted.

22. **Mr. Buntan**, noting that the State party appeared to have adopted a mixed model of disability, asked how it would ensure that the two models — medical and social — did not contradict each other and how it promoted a positive image of persons with disabilities and their potential. He also wished to know what steps were being taken to systematically involve persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in all levels of decision-making, especially at the regional and local levels. Applauding the State party for its enthusiastic efforts to improve accessibility, he asked how it ensured that accessibility standards were applied at the regional and local levels. Given the State party's scientific and technological achievements, in particular in the area of artificial intelligence, it would be interesting to know what steps it was taking to ensure that persons with disabilities benefitted from those achievements, notably in terms of greater access to information.

23. **Mr. Basharu** asked what measures were in place to actively consult with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. He wondered whether such organizations were provided with sufficient funding to enable them to carry out their activities, especially since non-governmental organizations were banned from working with foreign organizations.

24. **Mr. Parra Dussan** asked to what extent organizations of persons with disabilities were involved in decision-making and whether the State party intended to align its laws and its approach to disability with the Convention.

25. **Mr. Chaker** said that he would appreciate information on the services available to children with disabilities who required a high degree of support in order to access education, particularly those who used sign language. Could the delegation comment on whether the suggestions of organizations of persons with disabilities were taken into account in efforts to promote the rights of persons with disabilities?

26. **Mr. Tatić**, pointing out that the fines for rights violations provided for in the Code of Administrative Offences were rather low, asked whether there were any plans to toughen the penalties for discrimination against persons with disabilities. He would welcome a comment from the delegation on allegations of malnutrition and abuse in orphanages and on any action taken pursuant to the Ombudsman's call for deinstitutionalization of children with disabilities. He would also like to know how accessible airports, public transportation, hotels and government buildings were for wheelchair users.

27. **Mr. Pyaneandee** asked to what extent persons with disabilities and their representative organizations were involved in monitoring of compliance with laws concerning the rights of persons with disabilities. He would be interested to know how much was spent on disability-related activities each year as a proportion of gross domestic product.

28. **The Chair** said that she had been surprised to read about the State party's approach to primary prevention of impairment, which included the termination of pregnancy when there was a risk the child would be born with a disability. She wondered whether the State party considered primary prevention to be in line with the Convention. The Committee had received information indicating that two children with disabilities had been removed from

the custody of their foster parents, reportedly on the grounds that the mother was transgender. She wished to know whether the State party would consider returning the children to their foster family and abolishing restrictions on the parental and custodial rights of members of the LGBT community. Would it also consider combating intersectional discrimination by lifting the ban on so-called propaganda on non-traditional sexual relationships?

The meeting was suspended at 4.15 p.m. and resumed at 4.30 p.m.

29. **Mr. Lekarev** (Russian Federation) said that the use of the term "invalid" was of concern to many. Efforts had been made to bring domestic legislation into line with the Convention, including with respect to the definitions of "disability" and "person with disabilities". However, when the proposals had been submitted for consultation, they had been rejected, the argument being that the immediate focus should be on accessibility, reasonable accommodation and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, rather than on terminology. In addition, there was a fear among organizations of persons with disabilities that a revision of the terminology might lead to a scaling back of support measures. Therefore, the priority for the moment was the practical implementation of the Convention and disability laws. The definition would be addressed eventually, but he could not say exactly when.

30. The federal register of persons with disabilities was a compilation of personal data, including medical records, from different information systems in the Russian Federation, such as the Pension Fund and social welfare institutions. The information was confidential and fully protected. Based on the information contained in the register, persons with disabilities could access certain benefits, such as assistive devices, or apply for special medical services. There were plans to use the register to carry out surveys of persons with disabilities with a view to improving statistical data on various disability issues and making it available in a practical, online format. The data collected in the register would be shared with State, regional and municipal authorities to help them provide support to persons with disabilities living in their territories. Requests had also been received from various service providers, including the national rail company and banks, to access information that would allow them to adapt services and enhance accessibility for persons with disabilities.

31. **Mr. Dymochka** (Russian Federation) said that, although the medical model of disability had never really been used as such, in 2010 a decision had been taken to engage in consultations and study best practice worldwide on disability issues, following which the existing model had been modified to include additional social aspects on the basis of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, which took account of barriers faced by persons with disabilities. The practices identified had been gradually incorporated into the definition of disability starting in 2012. Best practices from other countries continued to be monitored, and changes were implemented as necessary to ensure optimum implementation of relevant legal provisions.

32. **Ms. Pelevina** (Russian Federation), responding to the questions on discrimination, said that persons with disabilities were equal citizens and enjoyed all the same rights enshrined in the Constitution and international instruments. Any violations or illegal acts committed against persons with disabilities were dealt with by the law enforcement agencies in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Criminal Code. In 2017, 13 criminal cases had been brought against persons who had committed offences against persons with disabilities.

33. **Mr. Belik** (Russian Federation) said that all Russian citizens were equal under the law and discrimination was clearly prohibited under the Criminal Code, although there were no specific provisions regarding discrimination against persons with disabilities. Penalties for acts of discrimination were relatively severe and included prison sentences of up to 2 years and, for public officials, a 5-year ban on serving in a public post. There had been cases in which employers had been prosecuted and convicted for violating the right to employment of persons with disabilities. Therefore, it was considered that the necessary legal mechanisms were in place to combat discrimination against persons with disabilities.

34. **Mr. Lekarev** (Russian Federation) said that the provisions of the Convention applied to all regions in the country, irrespective of their levels of economic and social

development and specific cultural characteristics. The objective in drafting federal legislation related to persons with disabilities was to ensure that it would be effective at all levels. Road maps aimed at enhancing accessibility for persons with disabilities had been developed and were mandatory for all regions. There was an understanding that efforts to ensure physical accessibility would take time, but each region was expected to have medium-term or long-term plans and earmark the necessary resources to achieve certain objectives. The pace of activity and the approach in each region differed according to its size and starting point, but the aim was to achieve a similar level of progress across the board.

35. A law on oversight in the implementation of accessibility requirements had also been adopted, giving the relevant authorities the necessary mandate to carry out oversight activities and provide objective information about the situation on the ground. There were eight registered organizations, created by organizations of persons with disabilities, with their own experts who assessed the level of accessibility of buildings and sites and published reports; some had developed their own systems of voluntary certification. One of the objectives of the Accessible Environment Programme was to ensure that there were public officials in each region with expertise on accessibility issues. Several training programmes had been launched to that end. In connection with the creation of the federal register of persons with disabilities, experts and representatives of organizations of persons with disabilities nationwide had received special training on information and communication technology and tools such as accessibility maps.

36. **Ms. Terekhina** (Russian Federation) said that training for future architects and professionals in the construction industry — but also for those in other fields, such as transport — included special modules on accessibility and the needs of persons with disabilities.

37. **Mr. Lekarev** (Russian Federation) said that the Accessible Environment Programme, which covered the period from 2011 to 2020, included methodological and practical measures, developed in consultation with organizations of persons with disabilities. Funding for the regions had been earmarked under the Programme, and workshops had been organized with representatives of regional authorities and organizations of persons with disabilities to identify the most important buildings for persons with disabilities and assess their level of accessibility. On the basis of the findings, subsidies were provided to the regions to undertake the necessary works in close cooperation with persons with disabilities. Both national and regional organizations of persons with disabilities were also involved in monitoring implementation of the Programme and evaluating the effectiveness of the action taken. By law, persons with disabilities must be consulted on all matters affecting them. It had been decided to extend the Programme to 2025. Plans for future work under the Programme called for measures to bring rehabilitation and other services closer to the individuals who needed them.

38. In 2014, Russian Sign Language had been granted official status, following consultations with the All-Russia Society of Deaf Persons. Persons who were deaf or hard of hearing were entitled to a certain number of free hours of sign language interpretation per year. Efforts were also being made to provide information in easy-to-read format for persons with intellectual disabilities.

39. **Mr. Kamkin** (Russian Federation) said that members of the LGBT community were not forced to undergo any form of treatment; any treatment was provided purely for the purpose of maintaining the health of individuals with certain illness. Sterilization of persons with particular conditions, such as intellectual disabilities, was carried out only pursuant to a court decision.

40. **Mr. Lekarev** (Russian Federation) said that the allegations concerning the removal of children with disabilities from their foster family had no basis in reality.

41. **Ms. Terekhina** (Russian Federation) said that the interdepartmental plan for inclusive education covered not only architectural accessibility but also special training for teachers on working with children with disabilities in an inclusive setting. Federal standards on inclusive education had been adopted. Significant progress had been made since ratification of the Convention, and there were now some 10,000 inclusive schools in the

Russian Federation, as compared with approximately a thousand in 2011. In other words, one in every five schools was now inclusive. The Government provided support to regional programmes for inclusive education, from preschool to higher education. Children with disabilities in inclusive education received a range of specialized support, such as speech therapy.

42. **Mr. Lekarev** (Russian Federation) said that efforts were also being made to provide high-quality vocational education for persons with disabilities. The goal was to ensure that persons with disabilities were able to choose an educational establishment based on their own personal preferences and not purely on accessibility criteria.

43. **Ms. Sosnina** (Russian Federation) said that, under the Principles of Social Services Act adopted in 2013, steps were being taken to ensure that adults and children with disabilities were able to live in non-institutional settings. Families of children with disabilities were entitled to a range of services in the home or in rehabilitation institutions, including educational and psychological services, as well as financial support of over 5,000 roubles per month. A system of early support was being developed to ensure that such families received assistance as early as possible in the child's development. With regard to psychoneurological institutions, deinstitutionalization was under way, and steps were being taken to provide alternatives, such as assisted living, for as many persons with mental disabilities as possible.

44. **Mr. Lekarev** (Russian Federation) said that some parties had called for the closure of such institutions, but the issue was highly sensitive. Practical procedures were first developed in conjunction with regions that were prepared to take the requisite action. Legislative norms or regulations were then implemented. Approximately 150,000 persons were currently receiving institutional services. Pending deinstitutionalization, the activities of existing institutions were being rendered more transparent through active social monitoring and State oversight.

45. **Ms. Terekhina** (Russian Federation) said that the Ministry of Education and Science had developed a federal database concerning children who were deprived of family care. About 50,000 children were currently registered in the database, including some 16,000 children with disabilities. They lived in care institutions, but vigorous action was being taken to promote their deinstitutionalization. Meanwhile, the Government was making every effort to ensure that the conditions in such institutions resembled as closely as possible those prevailing in a family environment and that the children attended schools in the neighbourhood rather than within the institutions. Road maps had been developed in each region for that purpose. Oversight was conducted by guardianship or managerial boards whose members included representatives of civil society organizations. The conditions in care institutions were also monitored twice a year by independent organizations. Cruel treatment of children in such institutions was entirely unacceptable. Whenever cases were identified, the perpetrators were prosecuted. All institutions were required to meet nutritional standards established at the federal level.

46. **Mr. Lekarev** (Russian Federation) said that terms such as "persons who are not fit to work" were no longer used, and action was being taken to find employment for persons with disabilities.

47. **Ms. Terekhina** (Russian Federation) said that the term "persons with mental retardation" in the law on education was being replaced by the term "persons with intellectual impairments". The reference in the law to "children with health limitations" was being replaced by "children with special educational needs".

48. **Mr. Korneev** (Russian Federation) said that the legislation aimed at combating discrimination did not divide discrimination into distinctive subcategories. All types of discrimination were prosecuted.

49. **Mr. Lekarev** (Russian Federation) said that, unfortunately, there was no nationwide organization representing the interests of persons with intellectual disabilities. He hoped that existing regional organizations would eventually establish organizations at the federal level. At all events, the federal authorities maintained close contact with regional organizations and took account of their views when developing policy measures.

50. With regard to measures aimed at eliminating prejudice and negative stereotypes, the Accessible Environment Programme had conducted an awareness-raising campaign on radio and television and via social media during the period from 2011 to 2015. Persons with disabilities were shown in real-life settings, such as schools and workplaces, and their achievements and contributions to society were highlighted. Footage was also shown of Paralympic champions. Annual surveys conducted to track the evolution of social attitudes towards persons with disabilities had found positive changes throughout the country. The Support Fund for Children in Difficulty had undertaken an in-depth study of people's reactions to persons with disabilities. Independent sociological campaigns had confirmed the positive trend and the change in people's attitudes. Inclusive education had played a major role in that regard.

51. Priority was also being given to inclusive employment. Procedures were being established to support the employment of persons with disabilities, especially young people, who faced the double challenge of having a disability and having little or no work experience. Employers were being encouraged to treat persons with disabilities in the same way as other employees. The effective involvement of persons with disabilities in the workplace was seen as an effective means of combating prejudice and eliminating stereotypes.

52. **Ms. Terekhina** (Russian Federation) said that, from an early age, schoolchildren received instruction aimed at combating stereotypes and promoting understanding and acceptance of persons with disability. Children and their parents were informed about disabilities, the type of support that could be provided to persons with disabilities and how to interact with them.

53. **Mr. Lekarev** (Russian Federation) said that the city of Moscow was unfortunately not yet fully accessible for travellers with disabilities. However, action was being taken to improve the situation. An accessibility programme had been conducted prior to the 2014 Olympic and Paralympic Games, not just in the city of Sochi but also in major aviation transport hubs, including Moscow. A special Accessible Environment Programme was also being implemented in Moscow.

54. **Mr. Egorshov** (Russian Federation), replying to the question concerning fines under the Code of Administrative Offences, said that the fine for breaches of the regulations concerning accessible parking places for persons with disabilities was equivalent to \$800.

55. Transport accessibility policies varied from region to region, depending on the number of roads, ports and airports. The Government's policy was aimed at ensuring accessible transport throughout the country, not just in major cities, such as Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Railroads were the easiest means of transport for persons with disabilities. There were more than 900 railway stations in the country and, since ratification of the Convention, a great deal of work had been undertaken to render them accessible. Between 10 and 15 major reconstruction projects were undertaken each year, and 80 per cent of railway stations were currently accessible. Wheelchairs and wheelchair lifts had been purchased, and a number of railway carriages had been specially equipped for the transport of persons with disabilities. During the period from 2014 to 2017, more than \$95 million had been spent on such carriages. Manufacturers of transport vehicles, such as buses, trolley buses, trams and subway vehicles, were required to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities. The sum allocated for the purchase of such vehicles in 2016 exceeded \$800 million.

56. **Mr. Lekarev** (Russian Federation) said that associations of hotel owners had developed a road map on compliance with accessibility standards, especially in older hotel buildings. All new buildings were required to ensure accessibility, and the largest companies were encouraged, in line with their role as trendsetters, to foster a corporate culture that promoted accessibility.

Articles 10-20

57. **Mr. Ruskus** noted that persons with disabilities could still be deprived of their legal capacity in the State party. Russian legislation now provided for partial legal capacity, but it did not change the discriminatory substance of the applicable legal provisions. He asked

whether there were any plans to repeal legislation providing for the full or partial deprivation of the legal capacity of persons with disabilities, to fully restore their legal capacity and to replace the existing system with a system of supported decision-making. The level of legal protection for persons deprived of their legal capacity in psychiatric hospitals and institutions was very low. He would like to know whether there was a specific plan at the national or regional level for the deinstitutionalization of persons with disabilities. He would also like information about steps taken to abolish the widespread practice of forced placement and treatment of persons with psychosocial disabilities in psychiatric hospitals and psychoneurological institutions on the grounds of impairment and the confinement of LGBT persons in psychiatric hospitals on the basis of both their disabilities and their sexual orientation.

58. **Mr. Chaker** said that judges and court personnel reportedly did not receive special training on the rights of persons with disabilities and reasonable accommodation. There had also reportedly been cases in which courts had refused to take into account statements by persons with disabilities. Furthermore, many court buildings had not been rendered accessible. He wondered whether there were any training programmes for judicial personnel on the rights of persons with disabilities.

59. **Mr. Buntan** said that persons who were deaf or hard of hearing seemed to have limited access to emergency information in the State party. For instance, emergency number 112 was not accessible. He would like to know what measures had been taken to ensure that emergency information or information on disaster reduction was made available through sign language, Braille, or augmentative or alternative communication devices. He also wished to know whether persons with disabilities were allowed to sign cheques, to open a bank account and to inherit property.

60. **Mr. You Liang** asked whether a State system had been established to ensure independent living conditions for persons with disabilities and whether their representative organizations were consulted in connection with the deinstitutionalization process. He would appreciate information about any measures to ensure that persons with disabilities could enjoy their right to choose where and with whom to live rather being compelled to reside in institutions. He also wished to know whether measures had been taken to protect children placed in children's homes or boarding schools from physical, psychological and sexual abuse, whether staff had been trained for the purpose and whether such situations were monitored by independent authorities.

61. **Mr. Kim Hyung Shik** said that Human Rights Watch had reportedly visited 10 institutions for children with disabilities in the State party and found cases of neglect, poor nutrition, inadequate health care, lack of access to rehabilitation services and education, insufficient access to leisure and play activities, forced feeding and lack of drinking water. That organization had also criticized the lack of individualized attention and stable care-giving relationships. It seemed that the State party was confronted with the long-term task of deinstitutionalization and the short-term task of improving the quality of life in institutions. He would appreciate a comment from the delegation in that regard.

62. **Mr. Tatić** asked how assessment commissions operated and whether they focused on the capabilities of persons with disabilities and the barriers they faced in society. He welcomed the action taken to combat violence and abuse against children with disabilities in care institutions and would like information about the number of perpetrators who had been prosecuted. Lastly, he would like to know the State party's position on the draft Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine (Oviedo Convention) concerning the protection of human rights and dignity of persons with mental disorders with regard to involuntary placement and involuntary treatment, which the Committee viewed as contrary to article 14 of the Convention.

63. **Mr. Parra Dussan** asked how the State party proposed to align its concept of disability based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health with article 12 of the Convention. He would also be interested in hearing about the procedures for granting personal assistance to persons with severe disabilities pursuant to the relevant legislation.

64. **Mr. Martin** asked whether the State party had plans to educate legal professionals and persons with disabilities and their families about supported decision-making. He would like to know more about the quality of life in institutions and about how the rights of persons with disabilities were protected. He strongly encouraged the State party to terminate institutionalization. It would be useful in that context to examine best practices in other countries.

65. **Mr. Lovász** said that he would appreciate information on the number of licensed sign language interpreters for judicial and administrative proceedings and on the availability of documents in accessible formats to all persons with disabilities during such proceedings. In addition, he would be interested in knowing the number of persons with disabilities who were employed as professional staff in the judiciary as judges, public prosecutors or attorneys. Information about legal safeguards to ensure access to reasonable accommodation in the justice system, including law enforcement procedures, would also be welcome, as would updated information on measures taken to make detention facilities accessible for prisoners with disabilities. Lastly, he asked whether there were any plans to align the provisions of the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure with article 14 of the Convention.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.



Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Nineteenth session

Summary record of the 380th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 28 February 2018, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Degener

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Initial report of the Russian Federation (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by parties to the Convention under article 35
(continued)

Initial report of the Russian Federation (continued) (CRPD/C/RUS/1;
CRPD/C/RUS/Q/1 and CRPD/C/RUS/Q/1/Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of the Russian Federation took places at the Committee table.*

Articles 11–20

2. **Mr. Kamkin** (Russian Federation), responding to questions put at the previous meeting, said that prenatal screening for congenital conditions and developmental problems was carried out with the sole purpose of providing timely medical treatment. Medical practice was developing fast, and, increasingly, advanced techniques such as fetal surgery could treat certain conditions during gestation.

3. **Ms. Terekhina** (Russian Federation), responding to a question about a case in which children with disabilities had been removed from a foster family, said that the separation had not come about as the result of the mother's desire to change gender. Foster families in the Russian Federation were required to meet a series of requirements, which included reporting on the education and living conditions of the children in their care; during a regular check of the foster family's home, unsanitary living conditions had been discovered. The guardianship authorities had therefore decided to remove the children from that environment. Only afterwards had the mother's intention to change gender come to light. Regarding adoption, the Government would review the rule according to which persons with category I disabilities were not permitted to adopt as part of its update of the list of illnesses that prevented a person from adopting a child.

4. **Mr. Kamkin** (Russian Federation), responding to questions about the availability of new technologies for persons with disabilities, said that a programme launched three years earlier tested new diagnostic equipment and technology that could be used to help persons with disabilities to restore lost functions. For example, a groundbreaking operation had recently been performed to enable a person with visual impairment to partially regain his sight through the implantation of bionic eyes. Much progress had also been made in the development of prosthetic limbs. The programme was funded exclusively through the federal budget and any methods approved for general use were covered by the Programme on State Guarantees for the Provision of Free Medical Care to Citizens.

5. **Mr. Dymochka** (Russian Federation) added that the Government had been trying to expand the range and use of advanced means of rehabilitation, such as the use of prostheses, orthopaedic devices and information technologies.

6. **Mr. Korneev** (Russian Federation) said that the Russian Federation complied fully with article 12 of the Convention. All citizens enjoyed legal capacity throughout their lives. In the Russian legal system, however, only persons with dispositive capacity could exercise such capacity. Dispositive capacity was acquired at the age of 18. Persons with severe mental or intellectual impairments could be deprived of their dispositive capacity by a court, but could not lose their legal capacity. A guardian or family member could exercise legal capacity on behalf of a person who had been declared not to have dispositive capacity. Persons with disabilities had full legal capacity with regard to property and assets. They were able to open bank accounts and own, inherit and dispose of property.

7. Judges and other staff of the Russian courts regularly took part in continuing education courses and the highest judicial authorities carried out reviews of the administration of justice in cases in which one of the parties had a disability. There were no recorded cases of courts rejecting statements made by persons with disabilities. Any refusal of protection by the courts was a violation of the Russian Constitution and federal legislation. The Russian courts always did their utmost to ensure that persons with disabilities could defend their rights. In civil cases, parties who needed sign language interpretation or documentation in Braille were required to make their own arrangements.

Any costs incurred were borne by the losing party. In criminal cases, the State was required to provide sign language interpretation and documentation in Braille, when needed. Persons with disabilities were in no way prevented from working as judges in the Russian Federation. Unfortunately, he had not been able to obtain any statistics on the number of persons with disabilities currently working as judges.

8. Over 3,000 court buildings were accessible to persons with disabilities, and 73 per cent of those buildings were also equipped with lifts, ramps and other accessibility devices within the building. Any plans to carry out work on existing court buildings or to construct new ones must be prepared in consultation with persons with limited mobility. Funding allocated to accessibility improvements in 2018 amounted to €160 million; the amount was expected to rise to €180 million by 2020.

9. **Mr. Lekarev** (Russian Federation), responding to a question regarding partial legal capacity, said that efforts were being made to adopt an approach that took into account the opinions, wishes and preferences of the individuals involved. Work was under way on a bill on guardianship whereby persons without full dispositive capacity could make decisions themselves, with the help of their guardians.

10. **Ms. Sosnina** (Russian Federation) said that that psychoneurological institutions were regulated by the Principles of Social Services Act, adopted in 2013, and the legislation of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation. Citizens were placed in psychoneurological institutions on the basis of a personal application or one made by their legal representative. All social care services were provided with respect for human rights and dignity. Before the deinstitutionalization process could proceed, changes had to be brought about in various areas of society to ensure dignified living conditions for persons with disabilities. Community-based services that allowed users to remain in their own homes were being developed as part of the effort to phase out institutional care. Such services included foster families for adults and assisted living for persons with intellectual impairments. However, such changes could be costly. The Government would welcome advice from the Committee on how to accelerate the deinstitutionalization process. In the meantime, it was working on improving the living conditions of persons in institutions.

11. The activities of psychoneurological institutions were monitored not only by the State, but also by individual citizens and human rights organizations. Under recently amended legislation, independent assessments of psychoneurological homes would be carried out at least every three years on the basis of criteria such as comfort, quality of staff and satisfaction with the services provided. Around one third of all persons with disabilities residing in psychoneurological homes were enrolled in educational programmes and plans had been made to increase access to education in the coming years.

12. **Mr. Kamkin** (Russian Federation), responding to a question about the treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons, said that what was generally referred to as "deviant behaviour" in the Russian Federation was not considered to be an illness and LGBT persons were therefore not treated in medical institutions.

13. **Mr. Belik** (Russian Federation) said that the Ministry of Internal Affairs had been training police officers in the use of Russian Sign Language since 2016. Persons who held certain positions within the police force, such as patrol officers and criminal investigators, were required to possess basic knowledge of Russian Sign Language. Some 8,000 officers had been trained thus far.

14. **Mr. Lekarev** (Russian Federation), adding that police officers were required to have only a basic command of sign language, said that the Government had been working on increasing the accessibility of the emergency number 112; persons who were deaf or hard of hearing could now use the service in 43 regions.

15. **Ms. Pelevina** (Russian Federation) said that in the previous six months two criminal cases involving the maltreatment of children had been brought against officials from institutions and one criminal case involving financial fraud had been brought against the head of a social care facility for adults. Prosecutors immediately investigated all claims or indications that the rights of persons with disabilities had been violated and took appropriate action to stop violations when they occurred. Under civil procedure legislation,

citizens with disabilities could request legal assistance and protection of their rights from the prosecutor's office. The prosecutor provided legal counsel during proceedings and monitored the enforcement of any decisions arising from those proceedings. In 2017 there had been some 20,000 such cases.

16. **Mr. Belik** (Russian Federation) said that, according to statistics compiled by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, around 11,000 offences against persons with disabilities had been recorded in 2014, more than 12,000 had been recorded in 2015, and around 11,000 had been recorded in 2016. About half were ordinary offences, such as theft. No cases of abduction, trafficking or slave labour involving persons with disabilities had been recorded in the reporting period.

17. **Ms. Terekhina** (Russian Federation) said that any rights violations relating to living conditions, physical and psychological violence, education or the provision of food and drinking water in State institutions were unacceptable. Investigations would be carried out in the ten institutions referred to in the report of Human Rights Watch and any public officials found to have committed human rights violations would be severely punished.

18. **Mr. Dymochka** (Russian Federation) said that assessments of the type and severity of disability were carried out on the basis of a biopsychosocial model of disability, using the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health. Assessments began by identifying potential environmental barriers to independent living. To ensure transparency and objectivity, a quantitative approach was adopted, which made it possible to determine the particular services and technical equipment necessary for rehabilitation. The Government was focusing on improving the assessment of children to ensure that age-specific developmental issues were taken into account and that quality care and rehabilitation were provided. Efforts had been made to render services more accessible, and the possibility of providing remote electronic services was being studied. In most public institutions, electronic queuing was available to reduce the need to wait in line. Data relating to the physical impairments of and assistive devices used by individual persons with disabilities could be transferred to the federal register of persons with disabilities, allowing those persons to take full advantage of the services provided by the State.

19. **Ms. Larionova** (Russian Federation) said that the federal prison service had made a number of amendments to its regulatory framework so as to improve the living conditions of persons with disabilities in the prison system. For example, prisoners with disabilities were always housed on the ground floor and had 24-hour access to medical services. Their special dietary needs were accommodated and they could be provided with special clothing and footwear. They could also be provided with rehabilitation equipment and assistive devices. A road map for the implementation of rehabilitation services in detention centres had been devised in 2015. Persons with disabilities could participate in prison educational programmes without any limitations. Juveniles followed the standard school curriculum and were provided with sign language interpretation if needed. In 2017, the prison service had begun efforts to acquire a fleet of specially equipped vehicles for transporting inmates with disabilities. In total, 20,054 persons with disabilities were serving sentences in the penitentiary system.

20. Prisons were monitored on several levels, by both State agencies and civil society groups, to ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities were respected. Members of public commissions had unimpeded access to penitentiary facilities and were free to express their views and submit recommendations for improvement. The prison service was required by law to implement such recommendations. More than 100 round-table discussions with public monitoring commissions had been held over the previous 12 months on issues such as medical support, social assistance and education in the penitentiary system. Persons with disabilities had participated in those discussions. Through close collaboration with the All-Russia Society of Blind Persons, the prison system had supplied more than 3,500 books in Braille to various penitentiary institutions in 2017.

21. **Mr. Korneev** (Russian Federation) said that, under Russian law, non-governmental organizations were not barred from receiving funding from abroad. Moreover, in 2016, changes had been made to domestic legislation whereby non-profit organizations that received foreign funding were not included in the register of foreign agents if they were

engaged in carrying out social support activities for persons with disabilities. In total, 6,790 organizations of persons with disabilities were active in the Russian Federation. Pursuant to legislative amendments made in 2017, non-profit organizations categorized as socially oriented received financial support from the State. All organizations of persons with disabilities in the country were eligible for such funding.

22. **Mr. Lekarev** (Russian Federation) said that master's degrees in tactile and sign language interpretation were now offered in over 80 educational institutions. The All-Russia Society of Deaf Persons employed over 1,000 sign language interpreters. Their salaries were paid by the State and their services were provided free of charge to persons with hearing impairments. Eleven institutions offered training in Russian Sign Language as part of the Accessible Environment Programme. Russian Sign Language had been granted official status under the Principles of Social Services Act. There were currently about 5,000 sign language interpreters. The number required was estimated at 7,000. As the need for sign language interpreters was expected to grow, the Government would continue its efforts to train more sign language interpreters.

23. **Ms. Terekhina** (Russian Federation) said that educational establishments at all levels of schooling were required to ensure access to quality education for persons with disabilities, for example by providing technical aids and adapting the curriculum as appropriate. The special needs of individual children with disabilities were determined by a team of health workers. Educational establishments were required to provide sign language interpreting and Braille resources where necessary. Teacher training at all levels of education covered the basics of sign language interpreting, as well as teaching methods that were tailored to the needs of hard-of-hearing persons. Those methods had been approved by the All-Russia Society of Deaf Persons. In order to tackle the shortage of sign language interpreters, steps had been taken to increase the capacity of training courses and to develop professional standards so as to increase the prestige associated with the profession and thus attract more trainees.

24. **Mr. Lekarev** (Russian Federation) said that decisions on disability issues made by authorities at any level without the participation of persons with disabilities could be nullified by a court. Organizations of persons with disabilities had helped to run workshops on the implementation of the Convention at the regional level, and local and regional authorities were being encouraged to work more closely with such organizations. In order to improve the implementation of the Accessible Environment Programme at the regional level, the Government, in collaboration with organizations of persons with disabilities, had identified 35,000 facilities as priorities for adaptation. Once those facilities had been renovated, the Government would seek feedback from persons with disabilities and try to address any outstanding concerns.

25. Public agencies were required to ensure that their websites were accessible to persons with disabilities. Improvements would be made to those websites as appropriate, taking into account the views of persons with disabilities and relevant international standards. Private enterprises were also being encouraged to develop accessible websites and mobile applications. One major bank had taken steps to review and improve the accessibility of its services, including its automatic teller machines.

Articles 21-33

26. **Mr. Ruskus** said that he would like to know what efforts were being made to collect data on persons with disabilities, disaggregated by type of impairment, age and place of residence, at the national and regional levels. He would also appreciate information on any disability-related research being conducted in line with article 4 (1) (f) of the Convention and on the involvement of organizations of persons with disabilities in data collection and research.

27. **Mr. You Liang**, noting that all applicants to higher education programmes were required to undergo a medical examination, asked whether persons with disabilities were ever denied access to higher education on the basis of that examination. He wondered to what extent the results of such examinations affected the employment prospects of higher education graduates with disabilities and whether higher education establishments provided

reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities. He also wondered whether persons with disabilities could be recruited as civil servants. In addition, he would like to hear how disability issues had been incorporated into the national programme for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

28. **Mr. Ishikawa** said that he would like to know whether persons with disabilities who were employed in the special posts mentioned in paragraph 167 of the State party's replies to the list of issues (CRPD/C/RUS/Q/1/Add.1) were provided with reasonable accommodation and whether they enjoyed equal opportunities for promotion and received equal pay for work of equal value. He would also like clarification of whether Russian legislation clearly prohibited the dismissal of an employee who developed a visual impairment or other disability during his or her employment.

29. **Mr. Basharu** said that he would appreciate information on the support services available to parents with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities to enable them to raise their children in dignity and to cover any disability-related costs. He wondered whether there were plans to revoke article 32 (3) of the Russian Constitution, which established that persons lacking in legal capacity did not have the right to vote. He also wished to know what assistance was provided to voters with disabilities, especially at polling stations, and how many persons with disabilities had been elected to the State Duma or to regional and local councils. Lastly, he would be interested in learning what steps would be taken to shift the focus of international cooperation from disability prevention to promotion of the rights enshrined in the Convention and to involve persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the preparation of international cooperation agreements.

30. **Mr. Tatić** (Country Rapporteur) said that it would be helpful to know how many decisions on disability issues had been nullified because persons with disabilities had not been properly consulted. He wondered whether the delegation could identify three or four areas of focus for the future, in the light of its dialogue with the Committee. He would welcome more information on the accessibility of tourist attractions and cultural sites for persons with disabilities, especially football stadiums, given that the State party would be hosting the 2018 Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup. He wished to emphasize that all facilities that were open to the public, including those run by private entities, should be accessible to persons with disabilities, in accordance with the Committee's general comment No. 2 on accessibility.

31. **Mr. Parra Dussan** said that he would like clarification as to whether the State party's special schools remained in operation and whether persons with disabilities were placed in those schools only when strictly necessary. He also wondered what measures had been taken to implement the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled; whether the State party had established digital libraries of accessible works; whether it exchanged such works with other countries; and how copyright issues were handled in that context.

32. **Mr. Buntan** said that he would welcome more information on practical and legislative measures taken to enforce physical accessibility standards throughout the country and on the legal status of accessible forms of communication such as Braille, sign language and Easy Read. The Committee had been informed that there were many abandoned children with disabilities in orphanages, very few of whom were adopted. He wondered what measures had been taken to promote foster care for such children, as opposed to institutionalization. Information on any action taken to remove the barriers faced by parents with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities would also be welcome. In addition, he would like to know how the State party intended to ensure that the specific learning needs of children with disabilities were met in mainstream schools. He wondered whether there were any plans to abolish the requirement that applicants to higher education programmes must undergo a medical examination. Lastly, he wished to know whether the State party had designated an independent mechanism to monitor the implementation of the Convention and whether a system had been established to ensure that organizations of persons with disabilities participated regularly in the monitoring process.

33. **Mr. Babu** said that the Ministry of Education and Science should consider issuing guidelines on the regional implementation of Federal Act No. 273-FZ, which prohibited the exclusion of children with disabilities from education. He would like to know what measures were in place to ensure that persons with disabilities, especially women, had access to HIV/AIDS treatment and support services and whether the State party had adopted a national strategy on HIV/AIDS. If so, had persons with disabilities and their representative organizations participated in the development of that strategy?
34. **Mr. Chaker** said that he would appreciate more information on the percentage of persons with disabilities who were in formal employment in the public and private sectors and on the situation of persons with mental disabilities with respect to employment.
35. **Mr. Lovász** (Country Rapporteur) said that he would like to know more about the protocols and legal basis for the use of injections to control sexual behaviour in institutions. He wondered whether the special education arrangements described in paragraph 152 of the State party's replies to the list of issues amounted to a form of segregation and whether the increased provision of remote learning services had resulted in the isolation of children with disabilities; clarification on those points would be appreciated. He also wished to know whether the Government had drawn up a strategy for the implementation of inclusive education, establishing a time frame, indicators and a monitoring mechanism.
36. Noting that it was unclear whether ambulances had been adapted to cater for all types of disability, he asked whether the delegation could provide specific examples of adaptations made to those vehicles. He would welcome more information on the protocols governing the provision of cochlear implants and steps taken to inform parents of hard-of-hearing children about all options available to them. It would also be interesting to learn what services, aside from medical assistance, were made available to parents of children who were diagnosed with a disability. He would like to know how current legislation protected persons with disabilities, especially persons with psychosocial disabilities, from being denied the necessary medicines and health care. He was also curious to know which party carried the burden of proof in labour discrimination cases. Lastly, he wondered why the accessibility of tourist accommodation was evaluated solely in relation to the needs of persons with limited physical capacities.
37. **Mr. Alsaif** said that he would like more information on support provided to families of persons with disabilities and on the special posts mentioned in paragraph 167 of the State party's replies to the list of issues.
38. **Mr. Kabue** said that he would like to know who was responsible for determining whether a person with disabilities required personal assistance and on what basis such determinations were made. He would also appreciate more information on the role of the family support specialist and on the content of the bill on support for the employment of persons with disabilities. Lastly, he wondered why it had been necessary to update the procedure for applying for supplementary pension assistance, what that procedure now entailed and whom it concerned.
39. **Mr. Martin** invited the delegation to give two examples of public information that had been made available in Easy Read format.
40. **The Chair** said that she would like to know what steps had been taken to ensure that women with disabilities enjoyed equal access to sexual and reproductive health services and information and to prevent forced abortion and forced sterilization, particularly among women and girls with intellectual disabilities. The delegation's interpretation of legal capacity was not in line with the Committee's general comment No. 1 on equal recognition before the law, which made it clear that legal capacity covered both legal standing and legal agency. Under the Convention, all persons with intellectual disabilities were considered to have legal capacity.
- The meeting was suspended at 11.55 a.m. and resumed at 12.10 p.m.*
41. **Mr. Lekarev** (Russian Federation) said that data were collected on a variety of disability issues on an annual basis. In addition, the federal register of persons with disabilities contained a wealth of data, compiled from a range of sources, on the living situation and needs of individuals. Those data were disaggregated by characteristics such as

gender, type of impairment and region. Efforts were being made to improve the accuracy of the register and to ensure that those responsible for data input were held accountable for any errors. At present, the register was updated on a quarterly basis, but there were plans to streamline the data collection system so as to make the data available in real time. The Government worked closely with organizations of persons with disabilities to develop data collection mechanisms and ensure data protection. The federal register would be used to find out more about the needs and concerns of specific categories of persons with disabilities, such as wheelchair users. In addition, persons with disabilities took part in surveys conducted by the Federal State Statistics Service on a broad range of issues, such as access to education and employment.

42. **Ms. Terekhina** (Russian Federation) said that the provision of tertiary education for persons with disabilities had been improved under a 2016–2017 comprehensive plan for inclusive professional education for persons with disabilities. Students were no longer required to provide a medical certificate when applying for a higher education programme. Ten per cent of all university places were reserved for persons with disabilities.

43. **Mr. Lekarev** (Russian Federation), acknowledging that quotas for the employment of persons with disabilities were not always filled, said that the Government planned to review and improve the implementation of the quota system. It was considering establishing a procedure whereby employers that failed to meet the relevant quota would be required to contribute to a special fund, which would be used to create jobs for persons with disabilities. Organizations with at least 100 employees were required to allocate between 2 and 4 per cent of posts to persons with disabilities. The competitive examinations for entry to the civil service were open to persons with disabilities and such persons were well represented in government ministries. They were also well represented in the State Duma. The Government aimed to incorporate disability provisions into all national strategies and plans.

44. **Ms. Terekhina** (Russian Federation) said that higher education institutions employed persons with disabilities, including persons who had visual or hearing impairments. Reasonable accommodation was provided to both students and teaching staff with disabilities who otherwise met the relevant criteria for admission or employment. In all higher education institutions, a record was kept of the steps already taken and to be taken to improve the accessibility of campus buildings. Each higher education institution also had a road map for improving its accessibility indicators and a specialist responsible for providing students and teaching staff with disabilities with information on assistive devices. Special resource centres tasked with ensuring the availability of equipment and information in accessible formats had already been set up in a number of higher education institutions and more were scheduled to open before the end of the year.

45. **Mr. Lekarev** (Russian Federation) said that persons who developed a visual impairment or other disability during their employment were accommodated, not dismissed. However, there were cases in which the individual's disability or health status made it impossible for him or her to continue working in the same job. The Government was working with the State employment service to develop special support measures for such persons. Every effort was made to find them alternative employment in the same company or similar employment in a different company.

46. **Ms. Sosnina** (Russian Federation) said that all families with children were entitled to child benefits, which could be used to cover the cost of education, housing or the installation of accessibility features. Parents who did not work because they were caring for children with disabilities were entitled to a special benefit. Furthermore, the Labour Code required employers to allow parents of children with disabilities who were under 18 years of age to work part time upon request.

47. **Mr. Egorshv** (Russian Federation), said that the Government's experience in hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games would stand it in good stead as it prepared to host the FIFA World Cup in 2018. No effort had been spared to ensure that spectators with disabilities could enjoy the event on an equal basis with others and explore the cities where matches would be held without restriction. Some \$6 billion had been invested in improving the national transport infrastructure, including by modernizing transport hubs and

purchasing vehicles that were adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities. A special effort was being made to ensure that trains could accommodate passengers with disabilities. New passenger terminals had been built at several airports, and existing terminals at other airports had been refurbished. Those infrastructure improvements would also facilitate travel for future visitors with disabilities.

48. **Ms. Kornienko** (Russian Federation) said that the accessibility of existing sports infrastructure was also being reviewed and, where necessary, improved. New stadiums had been built, and stadiums that had been constructed for the Olympic Games were being refurbished in line with FIFA accessibility requirements. Wheelchair-friendly areas had been created, lifts to all levels had been installed and points of entry had been widened.

49. In the Russian Federation, historic sites appearing on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage List had to be accessible to persons with disabilities. Efforts were under way to adapt sites that did not yet meet that requirement, while paying due attention to the need to preserve features of intrinsic cultural and historical value.

50. **Mr. Lekarev** (Russian Federation) said that Russian law required both State entities and private companies to ensure that the services that they provided were accessible to persons with disabilities. It was unlawful to refuse services on the basis of disability. The process of renovating all the public buildings that were currently inaccessible to persons with disabilities was understandably lengthy and complex. Until the renovations were completed, service providers were obliged to deliver services to persons with disabilities by alternative means.

51. **Ms. Terekhina** (Russian Federation) said that children with disabilities could either be placed in mainstream schools, in line with the inclusive approach to education prioritized in the Law on Education, or in special schools. It was up to parents to decide which kind of establishment would be most suitable. The network of special schools for children with disabilities was being expanded to meet growing demand. Children with disabilities who attended special schools were not segregated. They were free to participate alongside non-disabled children in a range of cultural and educational activities and events organized for students. Sign language was taught in schools in accordance with federal educational standards for persons with hearing impairments.

52. **Mr. Lekarev** (Russian Federation) said that Russian law laid down specific requirements intended to guarantee the accessibility of services to persons with all kinds of disabilities. A mechanism was in place to monitor compliance with those requirements in all sectors. Service providers that failed to meet the requirements were sanctioned.

53. **Ms. Terekhina** (Russian Federation) said that the number of children with disabilities who had become orphans had been reduced considerably as a result of an effective national policy. A series of measures had been taken to discourage parents from abandoning children with disabilities and to promote the adoption of children with disabilities. Families that adopted such children received increased benefits to help provide them with adequate care. Doctors provided information to new mothers whose children were diagnosed with a disability about the types of assistance they could receive and about the children's future prospects. Parents interested in adopting children with disabilities could participate in a special programme to learn about living with and caring for such children.

54. **Mr. Kamkin** (Russian Federation) said that a national strategy to prevent the spread of HIV had been adopted in 2016. The strategy provided for access to free medication for persons infected with HIV. Of the 1 million or so HIV-infected people in the Russian Federation, just under 50 per cent were receiving antiretroviral therapy. The share of the national budget allocated to the provision of antiretroviral treatment grew every year, and it was hoped that all persons infected with HIV would soon be able to receive treatment.

55. **Mr. Lekarev** (Russian Federation) said that the bill on support for the employment of persons with disabilities had been signed into law and would enter into force on 1 January 2019. Its purpose was to assist persons with disabilities in finding work through the provision of targeted support. The adoption of the bill had been welcomed by persons with

disabilities and employers alike and had led to a positive change in attitude towards the former. Employment specialists were being trained to provide persons with disabilities with the necessary support, identify barriers to employment and work with employers to ensure employee retention.

56. **Mr. Kamkin** (Russian Federation) said that the use of cochlear implant surgery was part of a more high-tech approach to rehabilitation. Persons who underwent the procedure received support, such as speech therapy, to help them adapt to their new environment.

57. **Ms. Terekhina** (Russian Federation) said that the Ministry of Education and Science had published numerous guidelines and recommendations to assist regional authorities in implementing Federal Act No. 273-FZ, including with regard to requirements relating to the learning environment for children with disabilities, the qualifications of teaching staff who worked with such children, and funding for the implementation of special programmes, the purchase of specialized equipment and the hiring of specialists.

58. **Mr. Lekarev** (Russian Federation) thanked the members of the Committee for a fruitful dialogue and said that the Government would continue to promote accessibility improvements, the provision of reasonable accommodation, early intervention, assisted living, the employment of persons with disabilities and the training of civil servants and judges. It would also work to strengthen links with organizations of persons with disabilities. The Government recognized the need to tackle the issue of institutionalization and was striving to put in place alternative living arrangements for persons with disabilities. The Committee's recommendations would be given due consideration by the Presidential Commission for Persons with Disabilities.

59. **Ms. Goncharenko** (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation) said that the High Commissioner believed the existence of an active NGO network to be the key to resolving human rights issues, including those relating to persons with disabilities. She had noted with satisfaction that many of the suggestions and recommendations made by Committee members were in line with those made by the High Commissioner. There was a pressing need to improve the conditions in psychoneurological centres and to deinstitutionalize children with disabilities. Although progress had been made in implementing the Accessible Environment Programme, the implementation mechanism remained complex, hindering further progress. The Government should devote more efforts to creating an accessible environment for persons with disabilities in penitentiary facilities. In addition to the High Commissioner, there was a comprehensive network of regional commissioners for human rights who would take the steps necessary to prevent any kind of discrimination against persons with disabilities during the FIFA World Cup.

60. **Mr. Tatić** said that he was encouraged by the importance the State party attached to accessibility, deinstitutionalization and cooperation with organizations of persons with disabilities, which were cornerstones of the Convention. It had been useful to gain a better understanding of the challenges impeding the implementation of the Convention across the State party's national territory and of the steps taken to overcome them.

61. **Mr. Lovász** said that, in view of the many obstacles hindering the full implementation of the Convention, the State party should pay careful attention to the Committee's concluding observations, which should be made available to persons with disabilities in accessible formats.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.